Tape ~~PAGE~~ NO. 32

TAPE INDEX

NARRATOR Louise A. Chrimes

INTERVIEWER Phyllis Lotz

PLACE Midland School

DATE September 1982

TRANSCRIPT PAGE NO.	TAPE COUNTER	SUBJECT	NAMES
1	008	At the site, in dining room area of school	
1/2	009	5 year lease on property	
2	015	Start school, Mr Squibb	
2	020	Students working	
2	024	Came to California, driving	
3	047	Twelve days to Cal. (Sierra Madre)	
	071	Visited with the Squibbs and stayed	
3	076	Duties at school	
	104	Lived at school, then cottage	
	108	Library	
4	112	Midland School requirements	
	127	High School level	
4	140	Home sick boy	
	154	Squibbs retired to Cambria	
	160	Heat their own hot water	
	170	Barn from dairy times, other buildings	
	176	Regular requirements for college	
5	195	Designed a medal for special events (a logo)	
5	210	Enrollment in 1933--14 boys, 7 adults	
	218	ten more each year	
	228	A few left because they could not attain scholarship	
	245	Post Office	
6		Dunn School	
7		Mrs. Kay Rich	
8		Lynn Moses	
9		Boys go to movie	

Interview with Louise Chrimes
Date of Interview: 27, Sept. 1982
Interviewer: Phyllis Lotz
Transcriber: Phyllis Lotz
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

PL: I took Miss Chrimes out to Midland School on Figueroa Mountain Road, north of Los Olivos, Santa Ynez Valley, to talk about her years at the school, we walked around the campus with the tape recorder.

We drove in to the campus crossing over a creek at the entrance and Miss Chrimes said the trees planted at the entrance were a gift to the school from one of the graduating classes. Usually the senior class gives something to the school.

Miss C: That building to the left of us, I don't know why it's there, it is now a pre-school called Family School but I don't think it is going to work.

It must be 2 p.m. now because all the students are free as there are no classes now. We should park here under the trees. This school begins with 8th grade, now it goes from 9th through 12th grade. The building in front of us is the main house, this is the library and that is a class room.

PL: The main house, was this here before the school started?

Miss C: Yes, this was here on the ranch of Mrs. Isaac Sahms who had the dairy in Los Olivos. She designed this house. Mr. Sahms was a dairyman. The house is square. This painting on the wall was done by Forrest Hibitts of Buellton. The ranch house has two front doors and two

big fireplaces. The ranch was on the market when Mr. Squibb, founder of Midland School came here. He met with the owners and we took a five years lease on 5,000 acres. Before that lease was up, in three years I knew we were going to be alright. Mr. Squibb decided to start a school like Kent School in Connecticut. I became the housekeeper, cook and nurse but the boys do everything, wait on table, clean their rooms, wash dishes, chop wood, and as they get to their senior year they are supposed to be responsible people. Perhaps you can come to graduation some time. It is a very natural program.

PL: How did you get acquainted with Midland School?

Miss C: I had known Mrs. Squibb all my life. I had driven with a friend across the country, with two children and two dogs. I drove in the mornings and she drove the afternoons. We came out (to California) in Dec. 1932. We came through rain and sleet, and when we got down in Louisiana I remembered the story of swamps and ice flows and thought of the Uncle Tom's Cabin story. I was from Brookline, Massachusetts. My friend was from New York State. Her husband was on a signing tour and Carolyn asked me to help her drive to California. We had a touring car with isinglass in the windows and canvas top. We came across in all kinds of weather. The first night we stayed with her cousins and they were horrified that we would try this trip. We had the two little

girls and the two dogs. In those days the cars had running boards so our suit cases rode on the outside of the car. It took us something like 12 days. We arrived in Sierra Madre just before Christmas. Then Carolyn decided to go Christmas shopping. Each of us had one child and one dog in the motel room as we stopped. One morning early boiling water started coming out of the toilet, I went to find the owner and told him about the toilet and in the meantime my friend had gathered up the children and the dogs because the water was everywhere. After I arrived (in California) I saw Mrs. Squibb and she asked me to stay. I helped do everything and soon it was Easter and I was still here so I stayed. For three years and the 20. I did visit at home. My mother was a master craftsman in Stitchery.

PL: What were your duties as housekeeper at Midland School?

Miss C: I bought the food and planned the meals. In the early years Mrs. Squibb or I got breakfast but later on we got some one to come and help with the meals. 7 days a week. If the boys went to town they could not be late getting back but if the were I would feed them, but they had to be back at 6 p.m. Sometimes one of the faculty would drive them up to the snow and leave them to get back to school.

PL: Where did you live?

Miss C: I'll show you my old house as we go around. I lived in the corner room of the main house for two years, there

was no money in the beginning. The Squibbs had what is now the library.

PL: How would the students hear about Midland School?

Miss C: They had to come with a pretty good recommendation from people who knew them, not that they were rich or expected to be. No liberties if the did not behave. The students can't fiddle around, the grades had to be good.

Breakfast was at seven, and there was three cereals, toast, hot chocolate or coffee, served buffet.

PL: Did you have any homesick boys?

Miss C: It was kind of cut one day... we had an older boy, he had been used to the city so Mr. Squibb sent him down to Mattei's Tavern for a few days to see people and we found out that he had started walking home. He came back but he needed to get away. It was quite primitive here.

I hear from the boys once in awhile. One boy we had his father here before him. The idea is that the boys are self sufficient, taking care of themselves, no heat. I have heard they do have electric blankets now. They still have to heat the water for their showers.

PL: We are now walking along the path at the school and Miss Chrimes is describing buildings, etc.

Miss C: Kay Rich has her building where she teaches Pottery and the big barn was here and used for exercise during rainy days.

PL: What studies would the boys be learning?

Miss C: Everything. All subjects that any school has, all you would need. Mostly to think and be self sufficient. At one time Mr. Squibb came to me and asked for a design for the Midland Medal. I had the privilege to work on that. It was to be the size of a quarter. I put in the silo, the chapel, and an oak tree. This medal was given to a boy for excellence. Mr. Squibb gave me the first one. It became the logo for the school paper. The boys read the paper while they are here, and I suppose the parents also read it. I came here in 1933 and the enrollment was 14 boys and 7 staff. When I retired in the 70's there were only those we could handle. But Mr. Squibb took on ten more at the beginning of each new year. Most of the staff knows soon if a boy stays by seeing them and knowing what it takes to stay. Sometimes the boy did not come back for the next term and it was just as well.

PL: Shall we walk around now?

Miss C: We are now at the post office and at one time, some of the boys lived in this cabin. There was one (boy) who was post master and he had an assistant. The windmill is gone. This is an outdoor classroom. The dorms are up in back. (We meet one of the teachers) My name is Chris Lowe, this is my fifth year, I teach English. We have 87 students, 37 girls now, they started five years ago.

Miss C: This building (Library) is where the Squibbs lived. There is a fine collection of books there. A portrait of Mr. Squibb hangs on the wall. There is a map that Mr. Squibb made, a map of the property. There are two front doors, this used to be the Sahms residence. There is a set of bellows in the room , part of the equipment from the old dairy ranch. A case full of trophies is here from games the boys won. When I read today and come across a word that I may not know, I can tell about it through my year of Latin when I was in school. Next door is the office. I had the room next, but after three years they moved me to another place. This is Mr. Swain's office and next is the old kitchen. A new kitchen was built later. Also there are many graduation pictures on the walls. They boys had to get dressed up with shirts and ties after showers, this would be after 4:30 p.m. to be ready for dinner. I used to have a dog, a Dalmation. Ted Chamberlin gave me a puppy with the understanding that when she was bred I could have the best puppy of the litter and I had her for 15 years. There is no cement around, only wooden steps and such. It seems strange to be back, I can remember galloping up and down these paths. This is the chapel. When we had chapel all the boys were required to come, non denominational. Those are all the class rooms, Mr. Squibb had them built.

PL: Is Dunn School (another private school in the valley)

patterned after Midland School?

Miss C: No. Tony Dunn took that school over years ago, until he sickened and died. Their ideas were not service, for instance Dean School which never should have folded, the head master did not cut corners when the was on. It does not have to happen (closing of a private school). Here is the studio and there are only two places the boys can smoke, this may be one of those places where they can come. This whole place brings back lots of memories. I thought there was one regular cook here but maybe the faculty wives are now doing the cooking. The boys do not help in the kitchen. The girls dorm must be right there. There are no classes after one o'clock. They pick up their mail and sit around and gab or do projects or sports. People always depend on each other here. Now, I am trying to find where my house is...there it is back up on the hill. I was put there for 18 years. First I did not have a toilet, but later then did install one. And a porch was built so I had a living room, my porch where I slept and the bathroom. The porch was on the hill side of the house. Mr. Rich's brothers came to teach for awhile and they used this house and added another room.

Mrs. R. I have only one student today. I live here. This is the Rich Art Building, 1969. Given by Mrs. Elizabeth Bixby Janeway in recognition for services of Kathrine and Benedict Rich to Midland School, since 1932.

Miss C; They beat me by 3 whole months. We have been friends for a long, long time.

I remember one of the boys, he is now grown and teaches at Stanford, and he had a son come to Midland, anyway, I remember him as a boy who always carried a stack of books, his name was Lynn Moses and Uncle Sam got him to do something special some times. I remember him coming along beside the dish-house which is not here any more, and as he got there he smelled a whiff of cookies, he stopped and stood there in front of the door and watched me and I knew what he wanted. I said, "If you wait a minute you can have one." I was just about to give him a cookie when Mr. Squibb came along and said, "Miss Chrimes, no mothering please!" So Lynn did not get the cookie. Mr. Squibb's philosophy was the boy was learning to be a man, and he had to wait. Occasionally I did help a boy. There was a time Mrs. Squibb asked me to tea when she got a sudden call to go to the infirmary so I came down and got supper for the boys. We always helped each other to make a better place for the boys. I remember thing Mrs. Squibb and I would do and I wonder now how we got so many things done. There was no set schedule beyond the fact you had three meals a day, which I was responsible for. Sometimes the boys worked and were paid in war bonds or war stamps. One member of the faculty was responsible for the boys who cut wood and he kept tract of the tools and how much

work the boys did. In all those years no one got hurt. The boys knew that if they did not cut wood, they would not have hot meals, hot water, or heat. During vacations the boys went home. No one was left at Midland. Those kids had a home and they were expected to go there during vacations. Once a dog was left behind and I had to feed it, I wasn't suppose to. At Christmas they had two weeks vacation. I remember one time some boys paid a little boy a quarter to borrow his bike and they went to a movie down town (I assume this to be to Solvang because that was where the Axel Nielsen's movie theater was on Alisal Rd.). Mr. Rich never missed anything so he followed them and sat right in back at the movie, so when they came out of the show he confronted them and they went back to the school and had to do 20 laps around the track. One of those boys is a very brilliant doctor today.

PL: I have enjoyed this afternoon with you Miss Chrimes, thank you for this interview today.